



494 ELM STREET
STAMFORD, CT 06902
(203) 325-0200

February 15, 2023

To Whomever This May Concern,

My name is Reuven Fischer and I am the administrator of Ark Healthcare and Rehabilitation at St Camillus in Stamford, Connecticut. We are a 124 bed skilled nursing facility located in beautiful, downtown Stamford. We currently have over 100 employees working around the clock, twenty-four-seven to take care of our ever-evolving patient population. My job, as the administrator of the building, is to ensure regulatory compliance throughout our operations and various departments, enabling the facility to provide the highest quality care and customer service to our patients, residents, and local communities. I have been the administrator since June of 2021 and am happy to report great progress in quality of care, staffing, census, and results from our state/federal survey. Saint Camillus, as it was once known in the local community, is emerging from a decade of mismanagement under previous operators, to becoming one of the premier skilled nursing facilities in Fairfield County under Ark.

I am writing to testify my grave concern over the new unfunded Connecticut 4.1 Per Day Direct Care Minimum Staffing Legislative Proposal . Anybody who works in healthcare or has worked during the Covid-19 Pandemic knows that staffing shortages have pervaded every sector and industry during this challenging time. Healthcare, more specifically, long term care, has suffered significant loss in workforce, with nearly 210,000 jobs lost in a two year period. The industry, per the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), is at the lowest workforce level since 1994. Experts have estimated that it will be 4 years (2027) for this sector of healthcare to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

As an administrator in multiple facilities during the entirety of this Covid-19 pandemic, I have hosted job fairs, scheduled interviews, engaged with the greater community, and even initiated communication with candidates before they even apply to a posted job. Nonetheless, these 36 months and beyond are characterized by rampant turnover, excessive burnout, unreasonable bonus requests, exorbitant agency pool costs, and around the clock piecemeal efforts to meet the current ratios and statutes in place. Despite all these efforts and experiences, staffing the building and attracting qualified and willing employees is among the greatest challenges that skilled nursing is facing to this day.

While increasing the hours per patient day for direct care is an important and worthy cause to seriously discuss, the new proposal, coupled with the current hiring environment without provisional funding comes at a highly inappropriate and unpredictable time. This proposal, given the daily challenges of staffing in nursing



494 ELM STREET
STAMFORD, CT 06902
(203) 325-0200

homes across the country, would be, proverbially, putting the cart before the horse. Operators and skilled nursing facility leadership are facing unprecedented challenges and expenses in struggling to staff buildings according to the current ratios, let alone to exceeding the staffing patterns. Orientations and job fairs are sparse and unattended as licensed and qualified candidates seek alternative routes and methods of employment in efforts to receive higher compensation than the labor intensive environment of skilled nursing.

As a company and facility, we continue to innovate and adjust our strategy in not only meeting but exceeding the required staffing ratios for all classifications of caregivers. I am proud to state that our facility has been among the best staffed centers in the state of Connecticut in recent months and years. Our philosophy seeks to nurture, develop, and invest in our long term care workforce. Without the human resource and element that defines caregiving, the industry would cease to exist. I fully support investing in the long term care workforce, however, there is a time and place for everything, including this proposal and initiative. The passing and enforcement of this proposal would put long term care operators and company in an unmanageable position, continuing to hemorrhage money in efforts to attain an impossible level of compliance. As the pandemic continues to wane and is set to expire in the middle of May, operators, centers, and patients will be forced to absorb a multitude of costs and expenses that have been offset by numerous waivers and pandemic related funding. This premature proposal and initiative will only compound the financial burden these organizations are shouldering. In a time where facility closures and bankruptcy have become commonplace, additional financial obligations are only exacerbating an already dire situation.

As mentioned previously, I respect and prioritize the importance of increasing discussions on the long term care workforce and direct care mandates. However, ensuring the financial means and reimbursement and allowing the job market recovery to take its course are essential to reaching this goal. We all wish the best for our patients and staff. However, patience and financial investment are key to setting up skilled nursing facilities for success as they attempt to recover and achieve the staffing levels of this mandate. I plead with the members of the committees to not pass this staffing mandate at this time and to reconsider the financial implications and current hiring environment.

Respectfully,
Reuven Fischer, LNHA
*Administrator of Ark Healthcare
& Rehabilitation at St Camillus*